



Buzzwords ...



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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

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Buzzwords No 8 May 1989



● "ALL I have to declare is a little pot."

NEW ZEALAND EXPERTISE IN DEMAND

New Zealand's beekeeping expertise continues to be in demand around the world with several consultants on overseas contracts recently, according to Murray Reid, manager of MAF's apicultural unit.

"Andrew Matheson of Tauranga has just returned from a month in Iran where he looked at their beekeeping industry and suggested which directions should be taken for the future. MAF has had a total of four consultants in Iran in the past few months, as part of an agricultural cooperation agreement signed last year by the Iranian and New Zealand Ministers of Agriculture."

Murray also reports that MAF's apicultural consultant in Gore, Clive Vardy is currently in Papua New Guinea for

about three weeks with Dr Denis Anderson of DSIR. They are looking at how far the mites *Varroa* and *Tropilaelaps* have spread, and assisting with developing quarantine measures.

DRUGS AND DISEASE

There's still a few beekeepers in this country talking about using drugs as a quick fix for AFB. Start feeding chemicals, they say, and we will cut costs by doing away with an inspection service. But it's interesting to see the way debate is going on this subject overseas.

Around the world both officials and consumers are increasingly objecting to contamination of foodstuffs. This doesn't just apply to honey - remember what happened in the US only six weeks ago when cyanamide residues were

found in Chilean grapes. All food products from that country were banned for a period, and you can just imagine how reluctant consumers will be to switch back to buying grapes from Chile. Also in the US, a strong campaign is being waged against the use of the growth regulator Alar on apples. Prominent figures such as Meryl Streep are involved, and apple juice sales are way down.

For beekeeping I see that drug use has three problems. Going back to basics I've dubbed them the "3 Rs": residues, resistance and reliance. That's drug residues in our products, resistance of the target pest or disease to the chemical being used, and reliance by beekeepers on drugs to the exclusion of other techniques.

Using drugs in beehives will result in drug residues contaminating honey. This may happen rarely or, if beekeepers are careless, it may happen more often. (Not that you or I know any careless beekeepers).



Malcolm Sanford, a beekeeping specialist in Florida, writes that at the recent American Beekeeping Federation conference drug misuse was a hot topic. He says that Terramycin continues to be found in honey across the country, and that one packer begged him to tell beekeepers to be more careful. Although treating AFB with sulphathiazole is illegal, unnecessary and very risky, large amounts of honey containing sulpha residues have been confiscated or rejected in Canada.

Varroa treatment might also cause problems. Many beekeepers in the USA are using fluvalinate, and hives in infected areas must be treated each time they're moved. Now there are real worries about residues of this drug. Contamination with Folbex was found in West Germany in the 1988 honey crop, but this Varroa-control drug hadn't been used since 1983-84.

And we know, of course, that chemicals applied in the brood nest can end up later in the honey supers, as bees move contaminated honey around inside the hive.

Now the next R is resistance - using a limited range of chemicals against one disease or pest is a sure recipe for

developing resistant populations of the target species.

And then the most insidious problem of all - reliance. There's a danger of beekeepers developing a mindset about disease, where drugs are the only solution. I've seen this quite recently overseas, where drugs are thrown at the problem but no other management steps are taken to prevent or control the drug.

Beekeepers can get into such a drug-feeding mentality that even the wrong drugs are fed - disease is present so find an antibiotic. I saw this in Iran and it's recently been reported from the US - beekeepers using products not intended for bees.

With beekeepers reliant on drug feeding other means of control tend to be forgotten. If a chemical is suddenly withdrawn (because of product contamination or drug resistance), the industry can find itself without adequate means of protection.

The world is moving towards more control on pesticides used in food production, not less. Our competitive advantage of producing organic honey will become more significant, not less. Knowing the three Rs of drug feeding will also become more important, not less.

HONEY CROPS

What honey crops? Here's what beekeepers around the country are saying.

Northland: Most beekeepers won't wet their extractors this season, though bush areas produced winter stores and a 5-15 kg surplus. There was almost no comb honey produced. High sugar bills are anticipated to get hives ready for queen rearing and pollination next spring, and the Minister of Agriculture has refused a request from the Northland NBA branch for interest-suspended loans to pay for sugar.

Auckland: Low crops except for some areas with pohutukawa

Waikato: Just under 20 kg per hive average, with some well-known local beekeepers having a zero crop.

Bay of Plenty: Similar to Waikato, with some beekeepers getting crops out of the district.

Marlborough: 25 kg average.

Nelson/Golden Bay: 15 kg per hive.

Canterbury: Very patchy, from zero up to about 20 kg average in some areas with irrigation. The financial effects of drought on beekeepers are severe.

West Coast: Variable, but crops average 26 kg per hive.

Otago: Clive Vardy of MAF (Gore) has estimated an average of 40 kg, with hives going into winter well except for some areas around the Waitaki Valley.

Southland: Average crop 27 kg, winter stores good.

1080 POSSUM CONTROL

In the last issue of *Buzzwords* I said that MAF and the NBA were waiting for details of this year's 1080 poisoning programmes.

Now we have the information, and there's a lot of operations being planned. I urge each branch to contact the various pest destruction officers in their area to discuss details.

In some areas the programmes are coordinated by MAF Livestock Officers, and in others by the pest destruction officers based at county councils. A phone call to either organisation will find out who's doing the work in your area. From October this year the Agricultural Pest Destruction Council will disappear and all noxious animal control functions will pass to the new district councils. This means that there will be even more need for you to liaise with local bodies as the APDC/MAF/NBA link at a national level will end.

Here's a brief outline of the areas involved: South Kaipara Head; Koputai Swamp (Hauraki Plains); south of Te Awamutu including Otorohanga and Waitomo; many areas near Taumaranui; major operations north of Taupo; between Te Puna and the Kaimais; a large area south of Ohakune and Ractahi; Wanganui River just north of the city; Taihape east of the Rangitaiki; Whangaeu River below Kariori Forest; large area in southern Hawkes Bay and northern Wairarapa; other areas in Wairarapa; Kaitoke/Whitemans Valley.

And in the mainland there's many small operations on the West Coast; an area near Culverden; Banks Peninsula; Mackenzie county; Central Otago; Outram; Beaumont, Lawrence and Millers Flat; Glenomaru; Tahakopa; Owaka; Ohai/Otautau; and finally Fortification in Southland.

Some of these operations are extensive and some are minor - it's up to you to find out if they'll affect you.

Research by MAF on making baits repellent to bees is continuing with beekeeping industry support, but until this work is finished moving hives will be necessary.



ELECTIONS - HAVE YOUR SAY

Don't forget that nominations for the NBA executive must be in by Friday 26 May. Think seriously about who would be effective and hard-working for the industry. Make sure the nominations are valid and get them in on time.

Nomination forms went out with the last issue of *Buzzwords*, and more are available from the NBA secretary at Box 4048, Wellington.

OZ HONEY PRICES

Bruce White of the NSW Department of Agriculture tells me that honey prices over there are very low. The Honey Corporation is paying members \$A1.02/kg for 0-20 mm honey and 88 cents for other types. Honey from beekeepers who aren't members of the corporation, and for members supplying more than their quota, is going for 77 cents. At an exchange rate of 0.76 those prices are \$NZ1.34, \$1.16 and \$1.01 respectively.

BRANCH NEWS

Marlborough beekeepers did an excellent piece of PR recently - they had a wasp day. With approval from DoC they poisoned nests in a reserve area, and returned a week later to dig them up to check for parasites. Both events got front page treatment in the local paper, showing the public that beekeeping is alive and well and that beekeepers are "good neighbours".

The **Waikato** branch field day addressed that perennial problem of tough times. Ideas they came up with included:

- Make a list of the things you need to buy, then don't buy them anyway.
- Refinance, especially if your current finance is from several lenders.
- The co-op is ready to provide finance at attractive rates to assist beekeepers to expand: conditions apply.
- Some banks may lend to farmers at 1% over the base rate if pressed hard enough. Threaten to take your overdraft elsewhere!
- Ninety-day bills can be attractive and give a saving of 2-3% provided you roll them over every 3 months and have a good cash flow.
- Send your wife out to get a third job.
- Check the relief packages offered by government: see elsewhere in this issue.

Hawkes Bay branch make their AGM more palatable by keeping it short (about one hour) and following it by coffee, desserts and live music, all for an affordable \$9 per head.

DROUGHT RELIEF

Beekeepers are eligible for the South Island drought relief measures announced recently. The area that qualifies is specified on maps held by MAF, but in general it covers the coastal plains and foothills from Kaikoura to Palmerston. If you're outside the area you may still qualify if you can demonstrate the effects of the drought on your business.

The relief packages are open to established or developing beekeepers, but not hobbyists.

Measures available include:

- * **Adverse Events Family Income Support.** From Social Welfare you can receive \$180/week for a married couple with one child, plus \$10/week for each additional child. This lasts until 30 April 1990, with applications made every 8 weeks until October 1989 and every four weeks after that.
- * **New Start Grant.** This enables people to walk away from their business with \$45,000, the family car, household chattels and tools of trade.
- * **Carry On Finance.** Under this scheme the government funds the interest component of extra finance needed, for two years. Businesses must be viable in the medium term.

For more information contact agricultural advisers at your nearest MAF office, the New Zealand Rural Trust or your local Federated Farmers representative.

REARING BETTER QUEENS

How good are the queen bees you buy? Beekeepers often complain about the service provided by queen bee producers and, like most complaints, I suppose that some are justified and some are unfair.

We need more hard evidence of the quality of queens produced in New Zealand, to give feedback to producers on their methods of rearing. Recently scientists in Ontario completed a comparison between New Zealand queens and ones raised at Guelph University. The news is both good and bad for New Zealand. Colonies with kiwi queens produced as well as the local stock, but the queen quality was not as good as that shown by Cliff Van Eaton in his survey in 1985.

The worst failure of New Zealand queens in the Ontario trial was the high level of supersedure. Even when two different introduction methods were used (mailing cage and push-in cage), 59% of queens were superseded during the first four months.

Nosema is often implicated in supersedure - in this trial 80% of attendants were infected, with an average level of 0.8 million spores per bee.

The queen weight was adequate at an average of 207 mg, but the spermatheca volume (0.829 mm^3) and sperm number (2.37 million) were not. These figures are averages, and there was a wide variation between queens from different producers, as well as between queens from the same producer.

The results of this study were published in the *American Bee Journal*, so have received wide publicity. It's now up to New Zealand queen bee producers to address the issues. Nosema control must be made more effective, and producers must improve quality control. Regular testing of queens is an important part of finding out which rearing methods are best.

QUEEN QUALITY AGAIN

How important is diet in influencing queen quality? One beekeeper has for several years been looking at nutritional factors in queen rearing. Reg Clarke of Blenheim is now looking for some volunteers to help with his trials. He would like to hear from anyone prepared to raise queens using different diet mixes. When the work is completed, Reg intends to make freely available the recipe of "eleven secret herbs and spices" that make Kentucky Fried Queens better than average.

The NBA conference in Dunedin would be a good place to discuss this with Reg, or contact him sooner at Sunflora Apiaries, 81 Lakings Road, Blenheim, phone (057) 89 803.

KIWIS HIT THE HEADLINES

New Zealand is continuing to get good publicity in international beekeeping journals.

Gavin White of Takaka featured in two issues of *Gleanings in Bee Culture*, entitled "The other down under".

That great friend of New Zealand beekeeping, Elbert Jaycox, mentions us often in his monthly column in the same magazine. In recent months he's described honey marketing from a New Zealand point of view, and also mentioned our industry organisation and newsletters.

Honey and fruit spreads from the Honey Village in New Zealand featured in a US article about these products.

MOVING ON ...

If this copy of *Buzzwords* didn't go to your current address, please advise the NBA at Box 4048, Wellington.

"I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."

BUZZWORDS IS ...

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